

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A surface-coated cutting tool, comprising:

a base material; and

a coated film formed on said base material; wherein

said coated film serves as an outermost layer on said base material, [[and]] has compressive stress, and is formed from a carbide, a nitride, an oxide, a carbonitride, an oxycarbide, an oxynitride, or a carbide-nitride-oxide of at least one element selected from IVa-group elements, Va-group elements, VIa-group elements in the element periodic table, Al, B, Si and Ge, or a solid solution thereof,

said compressive stress is varied so as to have strength distribution in a direction of thickness of said coated film, and

said strength distribution is characterized in that the compressive stress ~~at a surface~~ of said coated film continuously increases from [[said]] a surface of said coated film toward a first intermediate point located between said surface of said coated film and a bottom surface of said coated film and the compressive stress attains a relative maximum point at said first intermediate point.

2. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 1, wherein

said strength distribution is characterized in that a minimum compressive stress is attained at said surface of said coated film and the compressive stress maintains a constant value from said first intermediate point to said bottom surface of said coated film.

3. (Currently Amended) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 2, wherein

[[said]] compressive stress of the entire coated film is stress in a range from at least -15GPa to at most 0GPa.

4. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 2, wherein

said first intermediate point is located at a position distant from said surface of said coated film by at least 0.1% to at most 50% of the thickness of said coated film.

5. (Currently Amended) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 2, wherein

[[said]] compressive stress at said surface of said coated film is set to a value comparable to 25 to 95% of the compressive stress at said first intermediate point of said coated film.

6 (Currently Amended) The [[he]] surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 5, wherein

[[said]] compressive stress at said surface of said coated film is set to a value comparable to 35 to 85% of the compressive stress at said first intermediate point of said coated film.

7. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 2, wherein said compressive stress attains minimum at said surface of said coated film, the minimum compressive stress is maintained across a prescribed distance from said surface of said coated film toward said first intermediate point, and thereafter said compressive stress continuously increases toward said first intermediate point.

8. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 1, wherein said strength distribution is characterized in that said compressive stress continuously decreases from said first intermediate point toward said bottom surface of said coated film.

9. (Currently Amended) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 8, wherein [[said]] compressive stress of the entire coated film is the stress in a range from at least -15GPa to at most 0GPa.

10. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 8, wherein said first intermediate point is located at a position distant from said surface of said coated film by at least 0.1% to at most 50% of the thickness of said coated film.

11. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 8, wherein said compressive stress attains minimum at said surface of said coated film.

12. (Currently Amended) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 8, wherein
[[said]] compressive stress at said surface of said coated film is set to a value comparable
to 25 to 95% of the compressive stress at said first intermediate point of said coated film.

13. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 12,
wherein

 said compressive stress at said surface of said coated film is set to a value comparable to
35 to 85% of the compressive stress at said first intermediate point of said coated film.

14. (Currently Amended) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 8, wherein
 said compressive stress at ~~said surface~~ of said coated film is maintained across a
prescribed distance from said surface of said coated film toward said first intermediate point, and
thereafter said compressive stress continuously increases toward said first intermediate point.

15. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 1, wherein
 said strength distribution is characterized in that said compressive stress continuously
decreases from said first intermediate point toward a second intermediate point located between
said first intermediate point and said bottom surface of said coated film and attains a relative
minimum point at said second intermediate point.

16. (Currently Amended) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 15,
wherein

 [[said]] compressive stress of the entire coated film is the stress in a range from at least
−15GPa to at most 0GPa.

17. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 15,
wherein

 said first intermediate point is located at a position distant from said surface of said
coated film by at least 0.1% to at most 50% of the thickness of said coated film.

18. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 15, wherein

said second intermediate point is located at a position distant from said surface of said coated film by at least 0.2% to at most 95% of the thickness of said coated film.

19. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 15, wherein

said compressive stress attains minimum at said surface of said coated film.

20. (Currently Amended) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 15, wherein

~~[[said]]~~ compressive stress at said surface of said coated film is set to a value comparable to 25 to 95% of the compressive stress at said first intermediate point of said coated film.

21. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 20, wherein

said compressive stress at said surface of said coated film is set to a value comparable to 35 to 85% of the compressive stress at said first intermediate point of said coated film.

22. (Currently Amended) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 15, wherein

~~[[said]]~~ compressive stress ~~at said surface~~ of said coated film is maintained across a prescribed distance from said surface of said coated film toward said first intermediate point, and thereafter said compressive stress continuously increases toward said first intermediate point.

23. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 1, wherein
said strength distribution is characterized in that said compressive stress continuously decreases from said first intermediate point toward a second intermediate point located between said first intermediate point and said bottom surface of said coated film and attains a relative minimum point at said second intermediate point, and said strength distribution has one or more

similar said relative maximum point between said second intermediate point and said bottom surface of said coated film.

24. (Currently Amended) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 23, wherein

said strength distribution has one or more ~~similar~~ said relative minimum [[point]] points similar to said relative minimum point between said second intermediate point and said bottom surface of said coated film.

25. (Currently Amended) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 23, wherein

said strength distribution has one or more ~~said similar~~ relative maximum [[point]] points similar to said relative maximum point and one or more ~~said similar~~ relative minimum [[point]] points similar to said relative minimum point in an alternate and repeated manner in this order between said second intermediate point and said bottom surface of said coated film.

26. (Currently Amended) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 23, wherein

[[said]] compressive stress of the entire coated film is the stress in a range from at least -15GPa to at most 0GPa.

27. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 23, wherein

said first intermediate point is located at a position distant from said surface of said coated film by at least 0.1% to at most 40% of the thickness of said coated film.

28. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 23, wherein

said second intermediate point is located at a position distant from said surface of said coated film by at least 0.2% to at most 80% of the thickness of said coated film.

29. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 23,
wherein

 said compressive stress attains minimum at said surface of said coated film.

30. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 23,
wherein

 said compressive stress at said second intermediate point of said coated film is set to a
value comparable to 10 to 80% of the compressive stress at said first intermediate point of said
coated film.

31. (Previously Presented) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 30,
wherein

 said compressive stress at said second intermediate point of said coated film is set to a
value comparable to 20 to 60% of the compressive stress at said first intermediate point of said
coated film.

32. (Currently Amended) The surface-coated cutting tool according to claim 23,
wherein

 [[said]] compressive stress ~~at said surface~~ of said coated film is maintained across a
prescribed distance from said surface of said coated film toward said first intermediate point, and
thereafter said compressive stress continuously increases toward said first intermediate point.